

Survey comments on presentations by Joan Hecht and the Lost Boys of Sudan:

***TEMPLE BETH EL
Chappaqua New York***

Dear Joan and Kuek,

No words could adequately express my gratitude to you for your presentation at Temple Beth El last week. It was simply one of the most moving and most important I can recall. I hope you could tell that all those present were deeply appreciative of your words and your heroic efforts. Truly you are a light in the darkness, and an inspiration to us all who seek to make a difference...

Rabbi Joshua Davidson

University of North Florida

Many people around the world have by now have heard something about Sudan, but still do not know the depth of hate, atrocities, and death that is being brought about by human beings to other human beings. Sudan has been embroiled in one of Africa's cruelest civil wars. What is happening in Sudan is completely inhumane. The recent Lost Boys of Sudan presentation at our University, headed by Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan founder, Joan Hecht, was one of the most academically enlightening programs ever to hit our campus. The program so eloquently placed a face on the civil war that our world should never have allowed to happen. Because of this event many on our campus, including some of my colleagues, are now taking action. We sincerely thank Joan Hecht and" the Lost Boys," for this wonderful and enlightening presentation.

Kamele "Oupa" Seane
University of North Florida
Director, Intercultural Center for PEACE
Executive Director, FLAWI

Rotary Club of South Jacksonville

Joan Hecht has been one of our most compelling speakers at the Rotary Club of South Jacksonville's weekly luncheon meetings! With her fluent knowledge of Sudan and her passion for mission, our audience was captivated by her dedication in helping the Lost Boys. Joan's extensive insight was very helpful in opening discussion about the political strife in Sudan and certainly moved many at the meeting.

Odetta Struys
Rotary Club of South Jacksonville

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida

This was such a wonderful topic. I really enjoyed myself. I laughed, I cried and I was amazed by all the things these boys went through and their determination to survive. The boys are truly Hero's. In our country we are so blessed to have so many opportunities and I am ashamed that we don't even realize it. I wish we could have them back for the entire Blue Cross Blue Shield to experience...

This was an incredible story, amazing to actually see boys that escaped the Muslim's ruthless genocide.

This was the best diversity event I have ever attended. Bar none!

I enjoyed the combination of professional video & personal appearance. Meeting even one of the young men would have been okay, but to see each of them interact in the group, to witness their humor, support, personal ideas, goals,

etc was "frosting on the cake"... The spokesperson (Joan Hecht) also summarized their story most effectively...personalized it to motivate me to get involved.... and reminded me to be aware of daily safety, health care, education, family etc. that I too often take for granted.

Nothing could have improved this presentation. This is the best one that I have ever attended here at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida!

Florida Dept of Health and Refugee Services

Interesting, excellent! One of those life-changing experiences. One person can really make a difference. Revitalizing!

Although their story is heartbreaking, it is terrifically uplifting. Awesome! A very moving sentimental presentation!

***Peg Breen, Teacher
Horace Greeley High School, Chappaqua, New York***

Dear Ms. Hecht,

If we judge your message by the tears in the eyes of the students or the words they spoke throughout the day, it was clear that you and Lost Boy, Kuek Biar, made a lasting impression on our student body. For me personally, I was most struck by your question, "And how many of you have heard about the genocide of Southern Sudan?" A biting answer about our mass media. And of course about the absence of bitterness and the genuine plea of Kuek. The first assembly was especially moving.

Frankly, I hope this results in action...and perhaps contributions to the Alliance as well. In the words of William Sloan Coffin, there is a difference between sentimentality and love. Love calls us to action. Many thanks for your efforts. I hope we can keep in touch.

***Jennifer Hollingsworth
Teacher, Flemming Island High School
Orange Park, Fl.***

The students at our school really enjoyed the presentation by Joan Hecht and the Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan. Before the presentation, many had not heard the story of the Lost Boys. They were filled with amazement over what the boys had seen and experienced. They made comments like "I can't believe that goes on in the world" and "I am so thankful for what I have and where I live". I feel it really opened their eyes to the world beyond Fleming Island High School. It was wonderful to be able to have Ms. Hecht and these young men speak at our school. Thank you for allowing all of us to hear their story!!

***Jason Merritt
Teacher, Flemming Island High School
Orange Park, Fl.***

On behalf of myself and my students, thank you to Joan Hecht and the Lost Boys (now gentlemen) who presented to our school two weeks ago. My students are studying language and persuasive communication; awareness of world issues is a critical part of the curriculum. As you know, there is nothing more persuasive than first-hand experience. I think the presentation helped provide a sense of reality to the human suffering my students read about in the newspapers and Internet.

More importantly from my perspective, the gentlemen provided two important life lessons to my rather-privileged students. First, they helped my students realize how blessed they are to live in a country as prosperous, secure and open as America in the 21st century. It is my hope that this recognition will encourage my students to take responsibility to share their blessings with others, rather than arrogantly hoard their gifts. The second lesson was a promise that people can survive and even triumph over horror. While I sincerely hope that none of students will encounter suffering on the scale of Sudan, should the worst occur, maybe they will gain strength from the brave examples set by our visitors from that war-torn country.

Please thank the Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan for their time, honesty, and bravery. It must be a difficult trial to take on the role of model and spokesman, while simply trying to heal and grow as a person. I would imagine there is a temptation to try to forget the whole tragedy. So thank them for opening themselves to us. May the Lord bless and keep them.

***Bill Davis
South Campus Dean for Student Success
Jacksonville, FL***

The presentation at FCCJ North Campus regarding the sojourn, trials, tribulations, and triumph of the Lost Boys of Sudan was one of the most captivating stories my wife and I have ever heard or experienced. Children are true gifts from God and we seldom, if ever picture them living through the pain, suffering, death, loneliness, and despair these had to endure. I know that we experienced the whole gamut of emotions during the presentation. The true blessing of the presentation was to actually see some of the young men who lived through this ordeal.

The next time I hear anyone, be they young or old, tell me about their 'bad hair day' or how frustrated they are with their situation in the 'Land of the Free and Home of the Brave'—I plan to tell them what my wife and I learned about the Lost Boys and what they experienced... that will definitely serve as a wake up call to them and the rest of us to be grateful and thankful for the blessings we take for granted.

Inspiring...emotional...unsettling...the Lost Boys of Sudan presentation reminded us of the cruelty and inhumane behavior we can unleash upon each other as well as the difference that one committed soul can make to improve the lives of those who are less fortunate than we are.

Thank you, again, for the reality check.

Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, Florida

This was an incredible presentation by Joan Hecht and the Alliance for the Lost Boys of Sudan. I feel as if I am the one that is truly blessed to have the opportunity to meet some of these amazing young men. Even though what they have gone through was terrifying, their spirit, drive to excel, and never ending smiles were such an inspiration to me and for other attendees.

***Betty Metz, Chairman, School Advisory Council
West Jacksonville Elementary School
Jacksonville, Florida***

Dear Ms. Hecht,

I wanted to thank you again for your wonderful presentation of The Lost Boys of Sudan at West Jacksonville Elementary School last week. It was one of the most amazing presentations I have heard. Your special power point, geared towards younger children, was definitely age appropriate for our students (4th and 5th graders). It was beautifully done and well received by our students and staff.

You presented the history of The Sudan, and explained the living conditions and political situation in a manner that the children could understand. The challenges you shared were appropriate for the age, and avoided the areas that would be suitable for a more mature audience. You could hear a pin drop from start to finish!

As you know, West Jacksonville Elementary School is 98% low income, and 99% African American. When they saw and heard Atem Ajok speak, they were spellbound. Your photos of the living conditions in Africa and explanations of Atem's life were something they will never forget. Our students have many challenges in their lives and for them to see someone who has faced so many hardships and overcome through perseverance and hard work was an inspiration for all that attended.

I liked that you began and continued with the theme of how important it is to obtain an education, work hard and never give up on creating a better life for yourself, no matter what obstacles you face. You also showed how one person, no matter how young, could make a difference in this world. The children had great questions and hung on every word.

Our Principal, teachers and many other staff attended the presentation along with the representative of the Jacksonville Cultural Council. We were speechless after your riveting talk. The Assistant Principal said the presentation was the best he has ever heard. One teacher said we needed you to come back every year, and of course, our Principal took Atem to the kindergarten classes to meet those children. It was the best day for the school.

I know how busy you are, and how many requests you get, so I really appreciate your including West Jacksonville in your busy schedule. You are doing a great job, and really changing lives. Thank you again for coming to our school, you made an impression on everyone who attended.